

Matter of Fact By Joseph Alsop

Into the '60's by Force



WASHINGTON—Vice President Richard M. Nixon has now abandoned the policy position of President Eisenhower, in favor of Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller's long maintained position, which is also mighty close to Sen. John F. Kennedy's position.

Alsop The realists at the Republican convention have not been able to get over, or around, or under, or away from this interpretation of the remarkable agreement reached by Nixon and Rockefeller on Saturday morning. It is known that they did not clear their agreed statements with the President. They hardly could have, at 3:30 a. m., but even at a more normal hour, they hardly would have.

They hardly would have cleared this document with Mr. Eisenhower, because the answer, surely, could only have been a red-faced "no!"—for the statement flatly rejects the Eisenhower approach of the last seven years, which subordinated all other problems, including the national safety, to the problem of the budget. It acknowledges the justice of Gov. Rockefeller's defense critiques, which have so angered the President. It calls for greater national strength in every area, financed by greater national growth.

Of Gov. Rockefeller's role in this astonishing result, one can only say that he has levered his party into the 1960's by main force. All the enormous criticisms of Rockefeller by the Republican backs have now been dramatically answered. Instead of being flighty, ambitious, disruptive, and self-serving, Rockefeller has only been guilty of insisting on the importance of enormously big ideas and principles which his rival, the Vice President, has now made his own, too.

IDEAS ARE ABHORRENT to the dimmer, fatter, more comfortable sort of Republicans. This triumph of Rocke-

efeller's ideas is doubly abhorrent to them. A good many of them are running around in circles, barking like the dog that the Russian scientist, Pavlov, brought to the point of canine nervous breakdown. They hardly know whether to be more angry with Rockefeller or Nixon.

But the other main point of this episode lies in the fact that Richard M. Nixon has not capitulated, in any real sense of the word. He has not bought ideas which were not his own. He has not accepted principles in which he does not believe. On the contrary, he has merely torn off the facial shrubbery that all the Administration's "team players" have been required to wear. He has shown his real mind at last.

For very obvious political reasons, the Vice President would certainly have preferred to remove the crepe hair at his leisure, and in his own way. But events and Rockefeller conspired together to force his hand.

Nixon knew, of course, that Secretary of State Christian A. Herter went to Newport last Tuesday, to give the President something unpleasantly close to a war warning. He knew, of course, about the rising sentiment among the Administration policy-makers on a working level, in favor of an immediate massive increase in defense appropriations to show Nikita S. Khrushchev that this country still means what it says.

IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES, Nixon might have daffed Rockefeller and fought for a meaningless and, bland platform, inoffensive to the President. Being a highly practical politician, he would also have fought the campaign itself on the peace and prosperity themes, if events had permitted. But with every world horizon darkening so ominously, the more drastic course of cutting the cord that naturally binds the Vice President to the President was the only sensible course.

His personal loyalty to the President, his real affection for Mr. Eisenhower, must have made this drastic course emotionally painful to Nixon.

But it was certainly not intellectually painful.

Anyone who has closely studied Nixon's attempt to keep up the old appearances, in his speech on "growth-manship," for example, can see that the heart of this speech was in the last paragraph but one of this paragraph called for doing just about everything the advocates of more rapid national growth want so much to do. By the same token, anyone who knows the Vice President at all well is aware that he has long been deeply troubled about the national defense posture.

AS THE CREPE HAIR has now been removed so abruptly, many will charge Nixon with past hypocrisy or expediency. But it has always been his concept that the Vice President has a positive, constitutional duty to accept the President's judgment as long as he is acting in his vice presidential capacity. He has no other choice, indeed, so long as he does not refuse to sit on the National Security Council.

This was why Nixon insisted for so long that he could only develop his own views after being nominated, when he was acting in an independent capacity as his party's presidential candidate.

And, as the old platform would have afforded a pleasant, more presentable transition for Nixon. But when Rockefeller stated out his terms, and declared that he would fight against a bland and meaningless platform, Nixon could not fight back. He would have been fighting ideas that are largely his own. He would have been fighting facts which he knows too well. He would have been fighting the whole situation symbolized by Herter's Newport journey.

If he had chosen to fight, Nixon could have run over Rockefeller like a tank. But a man can fight himself; that is what Nixon would have had to do if he had fought to the Eisenhower position.

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